

LABOUR

SEPTEMBER, 1950

Volume 29 * Number 342

Price Fourpence

CONTENTS

Improve Your Typing

Questions and Answers

New Appointments

Labour in Northern Ireland

Nuisance

A Canvass Progress Chart

Election Agents and the Absent Voter

- **GILBERT McALLISTER, M.P. ON
M.P.s AND THEIR CONSTITUENCIES**

ORGANISER

SITUATIONS VACANT

MONMOUTH C.L.P.—Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with National Agreement. Application forms may be obtained from Councillor A. E. Howells, **Unity House, Nevill Street, Abergavenny, Mon.**, to whom they must be returned not later than 21st September, 1950.

BIRMINGHAM BOROUGH L.P. require an additional full-time Agent to work under the Borough Party Organiser in a Group Agency Scheme. Appointment to be made in accordance with the terms of the National Agreement. Application forms may be obtained from **J. H. Nash, Birmingham Borough Labour Party, 25a Paradise Street, Birmingham 1**, to whom they must be returned not later than Friday, 22nd September.

WIGAN TRADES COUNCIL & L.P. — Re-advertisement. Further applications are invited for the position of Secretary-Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with National Agreement. Application forms from **Alderman R. Lewis, J.P., 14 King Street, Wigan**, to whom they must be returned by Saturday, 23rd September, 1950. Earlier applicants need not re-apply but are asked to confirm by letter if they wish their applications to stand.

KING'S LYNN C.L.P. invites applications for the post of full-time Agent and Secretary. The appointment to be made in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms can be obtained from **Mr. F. G. Jackson, J.P., 20 Jermyn Road, Gaywood, King's Lynn, Norfolk**, to whom they must be returned by 16th September.

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East Ham South Shows the Way

By A. DOWLING, Agent, East Ham South

EAST HAM SOUTH LABOUR PARTY aims to be second-to-none in the country where membership and organisation are concerned.

This is no idle boast because in the *Labour Organiser* of last October I explained what methods we used to achieve a target of 1,000 new members in seven weeks. In that period we actually enrolled 1,316 new members.

This year, we again planned to repeat last year's performance. Beginning on the 12th July (at this time the days are long and light, and the nights are warm), we set as our target 1,000 new members by the end of August. Up to the time of writing this article, mid-August, we have enrolled no fewer than 850 new members, 150 short of the target with three weeks to go. At this rate we shall easily beat our target.

This means that by the end of our campaign we shall have increased party membership in less than eighteen months by over 2,600 for, of course, we win new members all the year round, not only in special efforts like the present one.

How do we do it? Can our systems be applied with success elsewhere? I believe our methods are simple and can be of value to any constituency in the country. Remember we have only five wards and our electorate is only 43,000.

This is what we did and are still doing.

Personal Approach

From the last four elections, Municipal 1949, by-elections June 1949, General Election 1950, and the Municipal elections again, May 1950, we built up an almost foolproof marked register from the repeated canvasses in these elections. Promise Cards were written up for every promise voter. To these electors we sent a personal letter from the Divisional Party addressed to each prospective member.

The letter was printed in typewriter type, giving a more personal appearance than using ordinary Roman type. It looks more intimate and friendly.

The letter simply invited prospective members to join, appealed to their good common sense, pointed out that we believed they were supporters of the Party at election times, and offered them com-

radeship, educational opportunity, recreation, and an interesting worth-while object in life.

No blatant propaganda, no tub-thumping slogans, just a plain, honest invitation in a simple, friendly way.

This letter was delivered to the person concerned, and two nights later a personal call was made when the caller mentioned the letter.

Teams of workers under a Ward Organiser systematically called at every house where an invitation was delivered. Questions were answered faithfully, and where the answer was not known an answer was promised later. These promises were kept. Information about the Party and the ward was given and the friendly spirit created has been rich in response.

Every new member signed the Declaration and contributions were taken and cards issued. Later another personal letter was posted to every new member welcoming them into the Party and giving detailed information about the Party and the ward organisation.

Young People Remembered

For the first time, we decided to send out a special request to every member of the family between the ages of 16 and 25 asking them to join our League of Youth. Again the personal approach was considered best and a suitable letter drafted, signed by the young secretary of our League of Youth.

This letter contained nothing grandiose, no high-falutin' language, just a simple, easy-to-read statement of fact. In it the Secretary pointed out that although the films and dancing might be all right, that a spin out into the country at the weekend was highly enjoyable, nevertheless something was still lacking and that the lack could be made up by joining the local League of Youth.

Let prospective members be scared off into the attitude common among young people, 'hmph, politics,' they were reminded that a League of Youth Branch means more than politics, that it means having questions answered by Members of Parliament, visits to historical and interesting places, camping week-ends, supper parties, discussions and debates.

(Continued on page 9)

M.P.'s and their Constituencies

By GILBERT McALLISTER, M.P.

THE QUESTION of what a constituency may reasonably expect from its Member of Parliament has inevitably to be considered afresh since the General Election.

In the conditions of the present Parliament, with an almost evenly balanced House, the Government, to be certain of survival, has had to demand of its supporters constant and vigilant attendance.

It was the late Lord Snell—Harry Snell to millions of us—who said that if the average Trade Unionist was asked to work the long hours, to engage in the fatiguing duties of Parliament, to deprive himself of normal family life in the way that an M.P. is asked to do, he would go on strike immediately. There is not the slightest doubt about it. Forget the glamour for a moment—and no one would deny that a Member of Parliament carries a position of great honour and dignity—the work of a Member is often a gruelling ordeal taxing the stamina of all but the strongest.

It should be remembered that an M.P. is first of all a legislator. When he is elected he is the Member for such and such a constituency; but he is much more than that: he is a Member of Parliament. He is not the delegate of his constituency or of his constituency Labour Party.

First Duty

It is his duty to maintain full and friendly relations with his constituents. But it is not his duty to take instructions from his constituency. His first duty is to consider the interests of the nation as a whole and to consider the claims of his constituency within the national framework.

The world to-day is in a tortured state hovering in unstable equilibrium on the brink of an abyss. It is his first duty to think of that; to think of some way by which millions of ordinary people throughout the world should be delivered from the threat and reality of a third World War. It is his duty to pay the closest attention to the needs of his constituency in the matter of housing, industry and employment and to see, so far as possible, that no injustice is done to constituents within the framework of the existing law.

But an M.P. is not a welfare officer; he is not a solicitor—even if he is one in private life; he is not a psychiatrist; he is not a guide in the employment of Thomas Cook & Son; he is not a Citizens' Advice Bureau.

If an M.P. receives sixty letters a day, he has to acknowledge them, he has to write to the Minister concerned, and when he receives the Minister's reply he has to write again to the constituent. Therefore for every one letter a Member receives he has to write a minimum of three letters. In an involved case will require a lot more correspondence. Therefore an average of sixty letters a day will mean one hundred and eighty letters a day for the M.P. at a cost of 120 2½d. stamps—his sixty letters to the Minister are allowed free.

I personally think that the Constituency Labour Parties—and indeed many M.P.'s—are grossly overdoing their session at the local Labour Rooms where they are available to constituents. I think that an occasional session of this kind is good; a regular one is a gross imposition.

First, because a great many of the cases which come before him are cases about which an M.P. can do very little—in his own constituency most of the people who come to me want a local authority house and M.P.s have neither power nor influence in the allocation of local authority houses. But one receives every kind of request—from obtaining corsets for an outsize woman, to vetting the London fiancé of a Scottish girl!

If local Constituency Parties think that these sessions are of great importance, then the burden should in the first place be on the members of the local authority and only intermittently on the M.P.

The late James Maxton refused entirely to do this sort of work on the very reasonable ground that it cut too much into the time which he ought to devote to the consideration of affairs of national and international concern.

Every M.P. tries to make his constituents welcome when they come to the House of Commons. But an M.P. receives no Entertainment Allowance, nor is he allowed to deduct entertainment from Income Tax. As a Member for a Scottish constituency I feel that this is a special duty, and it is possible I show constituents round the whole building, which takes nearly an hour, and then entertain them to tea.

An M.P., however, has his duty in the House to attend to and it is quite possible to make arrangements to meet constituents a long time ahead and then on the day

question to find that it is impossible to see them at all. This is certainly the case when one is trying to take part in a debate and cannot leave the Chamber for fear of not catching Mr. Speaker's eye.

A Human Being Too

An M.P. is, among other things, a human being. He usually has a wife and children; he likes occasionally to potter about the garden. He feels that he is entitled to a little family life. If he is doing too many week-end meetings in his own and other constituencies this is often impossible. I remember in the first three months of 1949 that out of thirteen week-ends I spent only two with my family.

In the circumstances of the present Parliament the Parliamentary Labour Party eased the position of Members a little by informing constituency parties that they could not expect Members to be free to address public meetings on any day when the House was sitting. This point has, I think, been fully appreciated by the constituencies.

The Member of Parliament should try to maintain the closest relationship with the senior executives and officials of the Constituency Labour Party and much more good can arise from long and thoughtful discussions with them as to future strategy than from a series of ill-timed and badly attended public meetings. I hasten to add that this does not affect me personally since meetings in my Division are always well attended—but then I am fortunate in having the most politically conscious constituency in Scotland.

I have stated the negative side. On the positive side Constituency Labour Parties in closely knit Divisions should arrange for one or two big public meetings every three months when the M.P. is the chief speaker. But they should also give attention to a well thought-out series of propaganda meetings covering the winter months at which M.P.s from other constituencies should be invited to speak, together with people in the Trade Union, Co-operative and international movements, who are authorities on their subjects, and good public speakers as well.

There should be a number of more intimate meetings for members of the Party only, and here there is a good deal to be said for making the meeting an "invitation meeting", with a modest tea or supper as an additional attraction. Everything should be done to make these meetings "occasions".

Very often one attracts many more people by sending out formal invitation cards

than by mere advertisements in the local newspapers.

Now that most things are off the ration it should be possible to return, in some degree, to one of the happiest things of pre-war days—the party "At Home"—at which women members of the party provide all the food, decorate the tables, sell tickets for their own tables, and prove that the Labour Party in a town or village is not only the most active political group, but also the centre of healthy social activity. The M.P. should be present at these occasions if he possibly can.

Most M.P.s are in a slight dilemma in relation to their constituencies. They fear to advise too much because their advice may be misunderstood as a criticism of the officers of the Party, who are usually perfectly competent, and more knowledgeable of local conditions than the M.P. can possibly be. But few M.P.s would withhold their advice, help and complete co-operation if these were invited.

The invitation should come from the constituency parties to the Member, so that he does not in any way have to thrust himself upon them. An M.P. has the honour to be the Party symbol in his Division, but unless there is behind the symbol a team of hard-working people working together in the spirit of fellowship which was once the joy and pride of the Labour Movement, the Division cannot remain healthy. With power some of the fellowship disappeared from the Party. It is time to revive it; it is time that the word "comrade" began to have some significance again.

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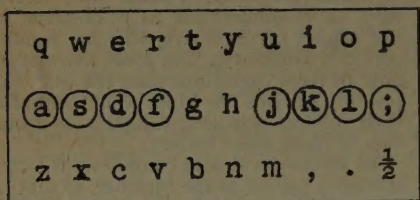
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Improve Your Typing

By MARGARET BREWER, Secretary, Acton Labour Party

THE AGENT who has either voluntary or paid typing assistance is a fortunate being. The following hints are for the benefit of those less fortunate Agents who discover that taking up an agency appointment also entails learning to type.

All good makes of typewriters possess what is known as the Standard Keyboard. That is, the place where you put your fingers is always set out as follows:



How to Begin

'Touch typing' is the quickest and most accurate method of typing. To do this, place your fingers on the "Home Keys" which are the second line up, with the little finger of the left hand on 'a' and the little finger of the right hand on the semi-colon. Thus each finger can depress its 'home key' and also the keys immediately above and below it. The index fingers of both hands cover all the keys left over in the centre.

To make a space, depress the Space Bar situated below the bottom line of keys with the thumb. Five spaces should be indented to start a new paragraph, one space after a comma, two spaces after a semi-colon and three spaces after a full-stop. If inverted commas are being used, any punctuation marks should be typed inside them as is the case in printing.

To make a capital letter, first depress the key marked "Shift," hold it in position and then strike the letter key. To type a line of capital letters, depress the key attached to the 'Shift' key marked 'Lock,' and unlock it again when the line is typed by smartly tapping the 'Shift' key.

The positions of the Line Spacer, Back-Spacer, Colour Change, Margin Release, Margin Stops and Tabulator usually vary on different makes of machine, so it is as well to contact the makers and ask them for their handbook which gives this information.

Keep your typewriter on a separate table from the one on which you work. You can then have your headed paper, copy paper, carbon papers and envelopes readily available on this table. Always keep your carbons in their box when not in use; carbons left lying about soon become creased and useless.

The typewriter rubber should be used gently and always slip loose sheets of paper between your carbons and copy papers when rubbing out on the top copy. The metal type faces must be cleaned frequently with a wire brush—particularly when typing stencils.

The chair on which you sit to do your typing needs to be about six inches higher than a normal chair. Your wrists should be above the keyboard when typing, and they did tell me at school that it should be possible to balance a penny on the back of each hand when typing! For the best results, do not pound on the keys but strike them evenly and sharply.

The number of carbon copies which can be obtained varies from four to seven according to the make of the machine and the thickness of the paper. When in the machine, the dull sides of the carbons should be towards you and it is as well to check this before starting to type.

Importance of Spacing

'Plenty of white space' is something we are constantly told to ensure when planning posters and leaflets. This also applies to a page of typing. Leave good margins on both sides and at the top and bottom of the sheet so that your typing looks like a picture in a white frame.

Finally, remember that a typewriter is an expensive and intricate piece of machinery. Always put the cover over the machine at night as dust injures it.

Most typewriter firms offer a monthly cleaning and oiling service, and it is money well spent to employ them. If the machine goes wrong, NEVER attempt to repair it yourself. Those screws look so easy to undo, but it will cost money to undo the damage which you will probably cause.

Only an expert can repair a typewriter, but it does not need an expert to type on one—only someone with commonsense and a respect for machinery.

Questions and Answers

Compiled by PAT CAVANAUGH, Organisation Department, Transport House

EVERYONE is familiar with the "Replies to Correspondence" column which appears in most newspapers and periodicals. Its object is to make widely known the answer to a particular problem, on the assumption that whilst only one person has taken the trouble to write to the Editor, the reply will be of interest to many others. The incoming post of the National Agent's Department often includes letters on electoral and organisational matter that, in addition to the direct reply to the sender, might well be referred to in the 'Labour Organiser' as general information to its readers. It is our intention to collate these queries and reproduce them, in the form of questions and answers, commencing with this issue.

REGISTERS

Q *Our Electoral Registers are compiled in alphabetical order and those of an adjoining constituency, similar in character, are in street order. Why this difference? Who should we approach to have ours put into street order?*

A The Representation of the People Regulations, 1950, require a Registration Officer to arrange the names on the register in street order unless the Local Authority whose clerk is Registration Officer considers it more convenient for any unit to be in alphabetical order. This is a reversal of the procedure operated prior to the new Act when the Registration Officer was required to place names alphabetically unless it was more convenient for them to be in street order. You should take this matter up with your Registration Officer. It may well be that you will find he has not fully realised the significant change in the regulations.

before a recount can be demanded? If not, what is there to stop unnecessary recounts taking place?

A The Returning Officer is responsible for the accurate counting of the votes and has the right to order his staff to recount the votes. The Candidate or his Election Agent, if present at the count, may require the Returning Officer to have the votes recounted, but the Returning Officer may refuse to do so if, in his opinion, the request is unreasonable. The number of recounts is not limited and it would be reasonable to request further recounts where the voting is very close and previous counts have shown different results. The number of votes separating the candidates is not specified, nor is the candidate concerned with any expense that may be involved. The power vested in the Returning Officer to refuse a recount is considered sufficient to stop frivolous requests.

LIST OF ABSENT VOTERS

Q *At a recent school I attended several Agents informed me that at the General Election their Returning Officers provided them with a copy of the Absent Voters List. Am I, as Agent, entitled to a copy?*

A There is no entitlement to a copy of the Absent Voters List, although some Returning Officers do supply copies to each of the Candidates or their Agents. The regulations only provide for the Registration Officer to have a copy available for inspection at his office.

RECOUNTS

Q *Is there any rule as to the number of votes there must be between candidates*

PARISH COUNCIL VACANCIES

Q *For the first time a Poll was held to elect our Parish Council. A vacancy arose through the death of one of the members and the elected representatives have co-opted a person to fill the vacancy. Is this in order?*

A Section 67 (6) of the Local Government Act, 1933, governs the filling of vacancies on a Parish Council and reads as follows: "A casual vacancy among Parish Councillors shall be filled by the Parish Council and the Council shall forthwith be convened for the purpose of filling the vacancy." There is no provision for the vacancy to be filled by taking a poll of the electorate.

Two Grouses and a Kick

By JOHN TAYLOR, Secretary of the Scottish Council

IT IS REGRETTED THAT, for reasons of National Economy . . . These words have usually meant acute disappointment interpreted in letters to the press as 'frustration' to the people affected, and usually we Labour Agents have looked on, our withers unwrung, recognising that it was some vested interest which had had a pet scheme torpedoed.

On two recent occasions, however, the same words have had application to our own profession and interests and we have liked them as little as the average 'frustrated' industrialist.

Dreams of Perfection

The first occasion was the decision to jettison the Spring Register. We regarded the twice-a-year check-up on Registration as one of the brighter spots in that curate's egg Statute, the R.P.A., 1949. Nowhere yet has the perfect register ever been produced, but in the old days of biennial registers we got as near to it as human frailty permitted, and, what with the return of the house to house canvass, the single, residential qualification, the abolition of the (Parliamentary) Business Vote, and one thing and another, we had dreams of that near-perfection in registration which is quite properly the aim of everyone concerned with the proper functioning of elections in a democracy.

They were transformed into pipe dreams by a Treasury decision in last winter's economy impulse, with the result that we had a General election fought in February on the Autumn Register while the check-up on the final Spring Register was proceeding after the announcement that there would be only one Register a year, and the consequent confusion produced a bumper crop of irascible complaints of faulty registration in every committee room of every Party in the country.

People who were not on the register on which the election was fought, having been assured that they would be on the new register, discovered on polling day that they were not entitled to vote and felt that they had been cheated, bamboozled and defrauded. With the inevitable reaction of people in this frame of mind they blamed the committee room officers for the omissions and no amount of careful explanations would convince

them that it was no fault of ours but just one of those things.

We bore that blow with commendable fortitude, if not disgusting meekness. Even if I am a voice crying in the wilderness I propose here and now to kick with as much vigour as I can summon to this unaccustomed exercise against the decision to abandon the publication of the electors' lists in a single draft register and to adhere to the stupid, complicated, tortuous jig-saw puzzle known as "Lists A, B and C."

We are told that the publication of a draft register would be too expensive and that this expense is not justified in present circumstances. Pardon me, Chuter and Staff and Lords of the Treasury, but you have produced no figures that I have seen to prove the contention, and I do not believe it. I grant you that it will be costly to produce a combination of Lists A, B and C in one production in each constituency, but it is also costly to produce lists A and C and I find it difficult to believe that the difference between the former and latter costs would be damaging to our national economy.

Patience Exhausted

Experience in guiding would-be electors to examine Lists A, B and C in our own offices, at the local library or at the post office has convinced us that dozens of votes in every polling district are lost every registration period because the average person's patience is exhausted long before he or she has explored the maze of three documents, and it is our job and our pride to believe in the sanctity of a good register as one of the strongest pillars in our electoral system.

However, knowing the difficulties involved in changing an already cancelled decision immediately, if we must put up with the treble lists for a while longer, may I put in a word for the suggestion once put to me by Agent Smith, of West Dumbarton, who advocated the printing of Lists A and C in different colours. This would only slightly simplify the researches of the enquiring citizen, but anything at all which improves the existing feat of juggling is to be welcomed.

.. New Public Speakers

D. F. ALGER's article, 'Recruiting New Public Speakers' in the August issue of *Labour Organiser* is one worthy of consideration by all constituency parties.

Here in Kirkcaldy Burghs C.L.P. we have been doing groundwork on this for the past five years. One of our local parties, Burntisland, has run a Public Speaking Class under the auspices of the National Council of Labour Colleges on five occasions since 1945. The result is that although we have produced—as yet—no nationally known orators we can put half a dozen good supporting speakers, or chairmen, on the platform at short notice.

Many L.L.P.s in Fife have been doing similar work and an opportunity is now given to all four Fife C.L.P.s to put forward their best speakers. Kirkcaldy C.L.P. is sponsoring a Public Speaking Contest open to members of the Labour Party and all affiliated organisations in the county.

We look forward to this contest with the hope that Fife will produce an excellent battalion of Socialist propagandists and that other C.L.P.s will think our idea a good one and follow suit.

R. LIVINGSTONE
Hon. Agent, Kirkcaldy C.L.P.

EAST HAM SHOWS THE WAY

(Continued from page 3)

The response has been so good that the League of Youth are likely to be very busy indeed for some time following up the interested enquiries that have been received from youngsters wishing to join the L.o.Y.

That it all is. Just friendliness and persistence together with service and information. If a Labour Party did nothing else all the year through, that Party would have done more than holding a thousand open-air or indoor meetings.

Meetings reach a very small proportion of the electorate indeed; we have personally interviewed thousands of electors on their doorstep.

We have carried our message to the homes and shown that we are interested in people and their opinions.

For us the way to win new members has been clearly demonstrated. Can you beat us? We challenge you.

New Appointments

CONSTANT PROPAGANDA WORK and the canvassing of Labour voters is the advice of 24-year-old Richard Bates, appointed at the July meeting of the N.E.C. to South Bedfordshire.

To Exeter goes Charleton Prior after 27 years Party membership during which he has learned that new members are best got by a systematic canvass organised by polling districts or Wards.

Billerica now have as their Agent 27-year-old James Trotter, who comes to them from Wigan where he held a similar full-time appointment since June 1948. Prior to that he was Agent for Rochdale.

From Hornchurch, where he has been Secretary-Agent since 1948, to Romford goes Frederick Cullen.

After being a member of the Party for 24 years and for some time full-time Agent for the Wythenshawe Party, James Truffet has taken up a new appointment at Dover.

A young man with pronounced views on the importance of youth to the Labour Party, 23-year-old Roy Martin has been appointed as Assistant-Organiser to Blackburn Trades Council and Labour Party.

John Keys, appointed to Woolwich, puts forward the sound idea that a canvass for new members should be preceded by a suitable leaflet distribution.

After being a full-time Agent from 1919 to 1944, when he entered Parliament as Member for North Camberwell, Mr. Cecil Manning has been appointed Agent for Hayes and Harlington.

Using the local press to the best advantage is considered important by 25-year-old Gunter Stirling, appointed to Central Norfolk.

From Arundel-Shoreham to Dorking goes Edward Natrass.

New Agent to Kidderminster is Ernest Morgan, who goes there from the Ludlow Division where he has been full-time Agent since July of last year.

Another young man, Denis Franks, aged 22, takes up a new appointment; this time at Worcester.

John Shackleton, who has been a member of the Party for nine years and has been full-time Agent for the Barkston Ash C.L.P., completes the latest list of new appointments with his taking over the post of Agent in South-East Leeds.

LABOUR IN NORTHERN IRELAND

THE PROBLEMS facing the Northern Ireland Labour Party are quite unique.

First it is necessary to understand that the Northern Ireland Labour Party is a fully autonomous body, responsible for its own organisation and policy and not affiliated to the Labour Party. It is also necessary to understand a little of the background of politics in this area.

The political background is tied to the main essential of life in Northern Ireland, the Constitutional Position and Sectarianism. Every election, Parliamentary, Local Government or even for the Board of Management of the Belfast Co-operative Society is contested on the one issue, that of the loyalty of the People to the Flag and the Country. The inference is that any person who votes against the Official Unionist Party is a 'Rebel and a Traitor' wishing to abolish the Border. This attitude obscures the real issues at stake being an appeal to the patriotic feelings of the people. The only Party which does not base its case on Nationalism is the Labour Party.

For many years the Labour Party in Northern Ireland adopted a policy of neutrality towards the Constitutional issue, contesting elections and endeavouring to build a Movement based on economic policies. Following the General Election for the Northern Ireland Parliament in February, 1949, at which the only issue was the maintenance of the Border and close relationships with Great Britain the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Labour Party called a Special Con-

ference representative of all sections of the Movement to settle the Party Policy in relation to this most important issue. In the past all candidates at every election were given the opportunity of placing their individual opinions before the electorate, no clear and definite policy existed. The result of this Conference was that a resolution in favour of the maintenance of the Constitutional position, preservation of the present Boundaries and calling for a closer working association with the Labour Party in Great Britain was passed by the overwhelming majority of 20,000 to 700 votes.

This decision has had an important effect on the Party and its organisation. In a country where Nationalist feelings govern life itself, many thousands of electors had looked with suspicion upon the Labour

by **Arthur A. Johnson**

Party, not being sure which direction the Party would take if obtaining political power. This decision of the Party has now made the direction certain, more so in view of the action of the Labour Government in placing the Ireland Act on the Statute Book, that the 'Border' is safe in the hands of the Labour Party. The field has been left clear for the Party to develop its policy and organisation unhampered by an embarrassing position of neutrality. Having disposed of the most important political issue in Northern Ireland, great progress is being made in what must be the first important task facing the Movement, that of gaining the respect of the people for our Party and its actions.

Despite the actions of the Labour Government in placing the Ireland Act on the Statute Book, many thousands of the electorate will still not vote Labour at either Parliamentary or Local Government elections, but will do so for Imperial Parliamentary candidates. This can be accounted for by the fact that the Ireland Act gives the powers in relation to the 'Border' solely in the hands of the Northern Ireland Parliament. The consequent outcome of this in recent times is that the Party have concentrated on building up its vote for Imperial Parliamentary candidates and it will be noted that at the recent General Election a record high vote was cast for the Labour Candidates.

Financially the Party has great difficulties. It is still impossible to build a mass membership on the scale of Great Britain

and a strong reluctance exists on the part of the electorate to contribute to the funds of the Party. Affiliated Trade Union membership is low. Many Trade Unions affiliated to the British Labour Party are not affiliated to the Northern Ireland Labour Party owing to the influence of Toryism and Orangeism in the Branches. Despite the fact that the Trade Disputes' Act has been repealed in Britain it remains on the Statute Book in Northern Ireland making 'contracting in' obligatory. In many of the unions, particularly craft unions, the number of political paying members can be counted on two hands and even if affiliation was undertaken by these unions it would only be on the minimum number of 90 members allowable by the Party Rules and Constitution. There exists also the utmost difficulty in obtaining the co-operation of many Trade Union officials in the work of the Party.

Elections too are costly. In addition to the financial burden of contesting elections for *two parliaments*, it is necessary to raise money for use as the Returning Officer's Deposits. It is not widely known that a Deposit amounting to £25 is necessary for each candidate in Local Government Elections in Northern Ireland.

In England no organiser would think that a local Party could not be formed in any given area because of the lack of a hall. Even in the remotest of English villages there is always available some type of meeting place. Not so in Northern Ireland. There are numerous cases on record where absolutely no meeting place is available for the Labour Party. The position is bad in Belfast and worse in the countryside. In practically every village the only Hall in existence is the local Orange Hall from which the Labour Party is barred. In one village not many miles from the centre of Belfast the trustees of the only hall available have decreed that whilst the Labour Party may rent a room they must pay *double rent*.

Even for large public meetings the numbers of halls available in Belfast are so few that with bookings at a maximum the chance of the Labour Party obtaining a let is remote.

In England schools are available to local parties for members or public meetings. Even at election times the use of schools in Northern Ireland is not permitted. This section of the R.P.A., 1949, does not apply in Northern Ireland. This means that all meetings held during an election campaign must be held in the open air, which of course creates enormous difficulties under certain circumstances.

The Unionist 'Tory' Party machine in Northern Ireland is an extremely efficient election machine. As well as the normal political machine they have the fullest co-operation of the Orange Order, the National Union of Protestants and many other ancillary organisations. These organisations supply at elections innumerable helpers, particularly that most important type of helper, Polling Agents. When it is considered that in the five Divisions contested by the Labour Party at the recent General Election there were approximately 600 polling stations, it will be seen the immensity of Labour's task in manning every station.

There is, despite protestations to the contrary, widespread personation on all sides, each Party's supporters being guilty. The appointment of polling agents does help to keep this evil to a minimum and the Party have high hopes that it will become even less as time goes on.

The Unionist Party exploit in every manner possible the national emblem, the Union Jack. It is displayed on every platform, it is reproduced in poster form and even the Royal Family have been mentioned in election propaganda.

Despite the problems that beset the Northern Ireland Labour Party and despite the lack of success at recent elections nevertheless the Labour Party is the only possible alternative Party to form a Government. It is with this in mind that the Party in Northern Ireland are basing their future activities and policy.

It is of course impossible to deal with all the difficulties which face the Movement in a short article but it should be pointed out that many false impressions can easily be gained of political life in Northern Ireland.

The Party during recent months has built up a Research Department organised in conjunction with an Information Department and I would suggest to any of our comrades in Great Britain who come to speak in Northern Ireland that they contact the Northern Ireland Labour Party through me for information or details on any subject or happening before making speeches that are sometimes regretted.

Comrades from England can also help by paying a visit to the Party Office at 105 Royal Avenue, Belfast. They are assured of a cordial reception and their visits will help to a very great degree to cement the fast growing friendship between our two Parties.

Conviction and Skill

by J. W. RAISIN, London District Organiser

OPERATIONS, which constitute the function of the Branch Committee Room, as distinct from 'Control' which is the function of the Central Committee Room, consist of two parts, viz.: (i) Operations *outwards*, i.e., towards the electorate and (ii) Operations *inwards*, i.e., towards Control. The operations outward cover all details involving contact with the electors, including distribution, canvassing, window display, etc. The operations inward consist of regular reports of progress under specific headings and of frequent communication on details of removals and similar individual matters. The 'inwards' side of the Branch Committee Room's work is all too frequently neglected, but this can be understood since the importance of 'control' is not very widely appreciated.

It must be emphasised that no intensive election fighting is conceivable in which this factor of reporting inward is lacking or is inadequate.

Let us consider first the outward aspect of the Branch Committee Room. Here the first requirement is recognition by the officer-in-charge of the Committee Room that every time a piece of literature is delivered or a canvass is made, some progress towards the desired result should have been effected.

Reaching the Individual

The totality of door-step contact constitutes the chief weight of the election-offensive; but it must be remembered that this offensive is conducted not so much towards the mass of the electorate, as towards each individual elector.

Moreover, there is at the same time going on an offensive, or offensives, from the other contending parties towards the same individual electors, although the weight of such offensives may vary according to the assumed political sympathies of any particular group or groups.

The operation towards the electorate must therefore be seen as so many individual electors, with corresponding approaches from the other contending parties. Obviously, this becomes a matter of personal relationship between the elector and the election-worker. Indeed, the highest part of the work of the Branch Committee Room Officer is the use of the

personnel at his disposal to achieve the best possible effect on each elector approached.

To say this is not to minimise the more clerical parts of this officer's functions, for orderliness and method cannot be dispensed with in any important undertaking. To a certain extent, however, these can be fairly easily induced by the advanced provision of *simple* instructions and of appropriate progress forms, including canvass-return forms. Where this is done and the Departmental Officers keep an eye on the Branch Committee Room Officer who is not so methodical, and help him occasionally with his reports, no very great difficulty in this respect is likely to be met with.

Necessity of Leadership

Far more difficult is it to ensure that the Branch Committee Room Officer is drawing to his Room all the available assistance and is using this to the best advantage. This demands imagination, command and vigour; and these are attributes of leadership, for that is what is above all required of the Branch Committee Room Officer—that he shall be a leader.

It may well be that he will himself actually take the lead in undertaking a difficult or unpleasant piece of work—although he would not normally spend very much of his time out-of-doors. He will succeed in his job if he can induce and stimulate in the minds of each of his helpers the thought that the particular task being undertaken, or the individual elector being approached, is the one effort which may determine the result of the election.

This is no fanciful conception. It must have been the case at numerous closely-fought elections—and it certainly happened at the recent General Election—that a few pieces of good work on the one hand and a few pieces of bad work on the other, determined the result of the election.

So the Branch Room Officer must be something of a psychologist, able to make up his mind, at first sight, whether an individual offering to assist is likely to make a good or a bad impression or whether he is otherwise suitable for any particular employment. He has a few

simple rules to guide him. The door-step worker must always be of reasonably good appearance and manners, should always be polite, and wherever possible should be of good perceptive power. Note the order of these requirements.

- (i) The door-step worker must always be of reasonably good appearance and manners. It is *never* a good thing for an elector to be confronted with unpleasantness either of appearance or behaviour on the part of anyone who can be identified as being associated with our Party or our Candidate. This does not mean that our door-step workers have to be all 'poshed-up' but it does mean that their appearance should denote a reasonable respect for the elector whose vote they seek and that their behaviour should give a similar impression.
- (ii) The door-step worker should always be polite. This does not mean that he should not be upstanding in his attitude. He is the representative of a great Party and a noble cause and a natural pride manifest in his bearing is both reasonable and desirable. He should not be encouraged to argue or be contradictory, but at the same time he must evince through his remarks his conviction as to the justice of the cause he represents and, but only by inference, the unworthiness of the views now apparently held by the elector.
- (iii) Wherever possible the door-step worker should be of good perception. This can only be tested by experience, and it is the chief requirement in the canvasser. It would take too long to state all the points involved under this heading but included among them is ability to detect doubt either in an opponent or a supporter and to estimate the probable causes for such doubt. These causes may sometimes be undiscoverable by the canvasser (or may sometimes not be really understood by the elector) but very often the causes are quite obvious; such as an effective display of window cards of the wrong kind (from the elector's point of view) in his immediate surroundings.
Inducing in the minds of sufficient electors a doubt as to the wisdom of the course to which they are inclined is the main purpose of the

campaign. Selecting the individuals most likely to waver is the chief part of modern canvassing.

In the Proper Niche

The selection of the right type of job for each worker, the organising of groups under suitable leaders and the exercising of personal example on occasion—these are the main parts of the 'outwards' side of the Branch Room Officer's duties. It is a difficult job, all too often undertaken by people who have been given little or no training possibly because its importance has not been altogether realised.

In a previous article in this series I have made the point that the majority of persons suitable for appointment to any of the principal offices in the election campaign must be known to the election planners well before the date of the election. Then let it be part of the preliminaries of the campaign that training is provided for all such workers.

Turning towards the 'inwards' aspect of this job, the clerical aspect of the Branch Committee Room Officer's work assumes the greater significance. But even in this field he must give evidence of canvass-progress, literature distribution, window display, or any other part of his operations must be really objective. In particular, he must not *anticipate* the completion of any piece of work, nor must he gloss over difficulties or disappointments.

He must deal with the utmost despatch, with any special enquiry from Central Committee Room and all matters affecting any other Branch Committee Room, e.g., removals.

He must live with his register, marking it up with every scrap of information which comes to him and so, gradually, becoming aware of the electors in his area, not merely as names on a list, but as individual people.

In this way, the Branch Committee Room will become far more revealing and will enable the Central Committee Room to form a truer estimate of the overall position.

'Happy Family' Atmosphere

There is yet another requirement for the Branch Room Officer. That is the ability to create the 'happy family' atmosphere. This is not to be achieved through the adoption of 'happy-go-lucky' methods. On the contrary, carelessness will rapidly bring retribution, followed frequently by recrimination and bad feeling.

To sum up: 'Operations' consist of (a)
(Continued on page 19)

Nuisance

By GEORGE VAUGHAN, Barrister-at-Law

ANOTHER BRANCH OF THE LAW which impinges upon the right of free speech and the right of public meeting is the law of nuisance. Not everything which the ordinary man-in-the-street might consider to be a 'nuisance' constitutes nuisance in the legal sense. The latter consists in 'any act or omission which is an interference with, disturbance of, or annoyance to a person in the exercise of a right which he possesses as a member of the public or the owner or occupier of some land'.

It would, for example, be a nuisance to cause crowds to collect so that the public could not exercise their right of passage at all, or so that the entrances to shops or houses were rendered inaccessible. It is thus wise to hold outdoor meetings just off main shopping centres, rather than on them, and if the audience is obstructing passage the speaker should urge them to make way. He will thus endear himself to the local man-on-the-beat.

Unsympathetic Ladies

It may also happen that a lady (it is usually ladies, I am afraid) of unsympathetic views may emerge from her residence and accuse the speaker of 'making a nuisance of himself' outside her house. Such attacks should, of course, always be treated with the greatest courtesy, for thereby the speaker will secure the sympathy of his audience.

If there is a complaint of substance, e.g. that someone is ill or that the children will not go to sleep, then the pitch can always be moved a short distance away. Otherwise the speaker should point out that he is exercising one of his rights as a subject of His Majesty and it will usually be found that this is sufficient for him to be left to continue his exposition. The site should, however, be noted as an unsuitable one for future meetings.

Complaints are heard from time to time that the police are being used to 'protect' Fascist meetings, particularly in the Dalston area of London. What the complainants forget is that every subject has a legal right to hold such meetings and

if the police have reason to suspect that opponents will be present, with a view to preventing the orderly conduct of the meeting, then the police have a *duty* to attend and secure the holders of the meeting in the peaceful exercise of their legal rights.

It will readily be appreciated that however distasteful such meetings may be, the protection of the right of free speech from a hostile majority is fundamental to the functioning of all political parties and thus essential to the correct conduct of democratic institutions.

Thus far I have been discussing meetings held in the open. The same rules of law, of course, as blasphemy, trespass, sedition, defamation, and so on, apply also to indoor meetings. Certain further considerations arise, however, in the latter case. What action can be taken to deal with disorderly members of the audience? Can or should the police be summoned if matters get beyond the chairman's control? Can the police enter the meeting even though they have not been invited to do so by the chairman?

Prevention is better than cure, and the organiser of a meeting will do well to provide against disorder by selecting a strong chairman who will deal with interruptions firmly and good humouredly, and who will know what his powers are should occasion arise.

A small group of sensible and reliable men of mature age to act as stewards is also a considerable advantage. By directing the audience to their seats they will create the impression that everything is going to be done in an orderly fashion *before* the meeting commences. A few words by the chairman enjoining order will also help to set the right tone as he makes his opening remarks.

Now that election meetings may be held on licensed premises rowdy elements may arrive determined to have amusement at the expense of the speakers.

In my next article in this series I will deal with the measures which should be taken and the pitfalls to be avoided if actions for assault are not to ensue.

A CANVASS PROGRESS CHART

TO KNOW EXACTLY how one stands before Polling Day must be the dream of every election agent. Good organisation is the key to such knowledge, but if that key be made into something tangible, something which one can look at and in a split second know exactly what calls to be done next in bringing out the voters then something like near perfection is being reached, writes Fred Moreau, Agent, South Ward, Friern Barnet.

This chart which we in Friern Barnet have evolved gives us, we believe, the necessary near perfection. A pictorial record of the campaign, it allows those whose duty it is to know, merely by lifting their eyes, how the campaign is running.

The charts are made on tenth graph paper, one tenth square representing one elector. Each street is graded down according to the number of electors who live there. Two columns represent the full electorate of the street—one for the 'For's', the other for the 'Against's'—marked up in different colours, of course, as the canvass cards come in.

It is advisable to have one chart for each Register of each ward, because if the campaign is being fought from one committee room with the intention of having a committee room for each polling station on polling day the appropriate chart can be transferred to its significant committee room on the great day.

Then their value is discovered and the committee room officials can tell at a glance in which street or area they must concentrate their activities.

This chart system was evolved to be used in conjunction with the Card Index system developed by Mr. Stimson, Agent for Deptford and is marked up in the following way. When the canvassers bring in their cards each evening the total promised votes and the 'Against' votes are marked up individually and entered in the appropriate area on the chart.

At the finish of the first canvass the Agent knows at a glance how many 'Outs' and 'Doubtfuls' he still has to contact for a hundred per cent. canvass. It also gives him an idea where to concentrate his second canvass if time is getting short before polling day. Finally on polling day a duplicate chart provides an instant visual picture where 'knocking-up' workers must concentrate.

| ELECTORATE | | FOR | TOTAL | AGAINST | TOTAL |
|------------------|-----|-----------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Sydney Rd | 730 | | 368 | | 223 |
| Pembroke Rd | 424 | | 270 | | 12 |
| Comwell Rd | 336 | | 211 | | 47 |
| Alexandra Rd | 297 | | 169 | | 48 |
| Olney Hatch Lane | 224 | | 51 | | 92 |
| Dampden Rd | 179 | | 87 | | 34 |
| Crown Rd | 107 | | 56 | | 16 |
| Alma Rd | 90 | | 60 | | 11 |
| Wetherill Rd | 82 | | 22 | | 27 |
| Newton Ave | 78 | | 25 | | 31 |
| Woodys Vale | 62 | | 13 | | 16 |
| Stanley Rd | 53 | | 47 | | 2 |
| Deaford Close | 37 | | 14 | | 8 |
| Roman Rd | 27 | | 26 | | 2 |
| Oak Avenue | 21 | | 13 | | 4 |
| Binkham Way | 3 | | 3 | | |
| TOTAL: 2750 | | FOR: 1434 | | AGAINST: 573 | |

Election Agents and the Absent Voter

By TREBREH

IN THE JULY ISSUE of the *Labour Organiser* I examined how claims may be made for a Postal Vote, in Parliamentary elections only, when the elector has changed his or her residence, and for Blind Persons. There are other forms of claims, however, and in this article I propose taking these separately and in some detail.

Invalids

This affects those who are prevented by *physical incapacity* from going to their polling place. Such persons can vote by post at all elections except Rural District and Parish Council elections, at which there is no postal voting. Claims must be made on R.P.F.7, and the Certificate thereon must be completed by a registered medical practitioner.

With the exception of those who are permanently incapacitated it must be obvious that only when an election is imminent should a claim be made in respect of a temporary illness. All election agents will thus see the importance of making full provision for this in the arrangements and set-up for an election. To meet this adequately I suggest that a supply of both R.P.F.7 and 8 should be available at the Central Committee Room and also at each of the other sub-committee rooms.

In addition, a poster or suitable notice should be displayed where it can be seen by everyone, giving particulars of the Postal Vote. These simple precautions will ensure that valuable time is not lost in helping those who are entitled to claim a postal vote.

Important

On the Certificate which the doctor signs he declares that (1) the statement is correct; (2) the applicant's inability is likely to continue for so many months or indefinitely.

Now in all cases of a definite period, for instance say two or three months, it is the usual practice for the Registration Officer, during a slack period between elections, to have the Absent Voters' List vetted and to notify such persons, on R.P.F.25, that he or she will cease to be treated as an absent voter owing to a material change of circumstances.

With this notification he will enclose a further R.P.F.7, on which, if the person considers there are still grounds for being treated as an absent voter, a fresh application can be made for the Registration Officer's consideration.

It would appear that all persons granted a postal vote in respect of a temporary illness—physical incapacity—are in due course taken off the Absent Voters' List. On the other hand, however, all persons for whom a doctor has signed the certificate as for an indefinite period remain on the list for an indeterminate period.

By Nature of Occupation or Employment

Those who are unlikely to be able to attend the poll because their employment either takes them away or prevents them in some way from voting in person, can claim a postal vote. The claim must be made on R.P.F.7, and the voter must state the general nature of his or her occupation, service, or employment.

Here again it is obvious that, generally speaking, claims should be made when an election is imminent as the person would then be in a position to know definitely if he or she would be likely to be away on polling day.

It is the responsibility of the Registration Officer to decide on claims and to interpret the Act. If he is not satisfied he may request further details, and if the claim is not allowed the applicant has the right of appeal to the County Court. If the claim is allowed it would appear to be granted usually for an indefinite period unless the applicant himself sends a request to have it cancelled, or ceases to be registered for the qualifying address.

It is not possible to say exactly as to whom this form of claim applies, every case would be judged on its merits by the Registration Officer. Two main factors must be taken into consideration, however, firstly the general nature of the occupation, service, or employment of the applicant; and secondly if the person is likely to be unable to go in person to the polling station.

Let there be no misunderstanding, the claim must be in respect of a person's employment as such, and not merely

(Continued on page 19)

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Union Notes

By L. H. M. HILLIARD, General Secretary

THE Union is, this year, providing accommodation for a record number of agents in the three hotels 'The Glenwood', 'Holland House' and the 'Rhonellea' which have been taken over in Edgar Road. By the time these notes appear in print all bookings should have been finalised and confirmed and all arrangements completed. It will not be possible then to make any alterations or additions but, just as a final precaution, if any of our members have a booking unconfirmed, please contact me without delay, for it is very easy, with all the complications involved, for an error to occur and we are most anxious to avoid any confusion or disappointments at the last moment.

Record Attendance Expected

Applications so far received both for Agents' Credentials and for accommodation leads me to believe that we shall have a record attendance at our own conference to be held this year in the 'Ballroom' of the 'Glenwood Hotel'. The E.C. will have a very full report to make on the Union's work over the past 18 months and we shall probably find that views will differ on the 'interim' memorandum which it is proposed to submit on the question of salary graduation. A subject that has been under discussion by all Districts and has been engaging the attention of the E.C. since last year's conference.

Resolutions are beginning to come in from the Districts. Scotland wants full district status but will meet with no opposition from the E.C. this year, who plan to recommend that both the Scottish and Eastern Counties Groups be given full district status pending any general reorganisation that may be necessary as a result of our expanded membership and to which reference was made in last year's Annual Report.

South Wales is greatly concerned with a recent decision of the Lord Chancellor to debar a full-time member of this Union from appointment as a J.P. on political grounds and will be raising the matter at conference.

London, I gather, is concerned with Union development and the need for reform in organisation, a subject that has exercised us for a number of years and is now becoming increasingly urgent and desirable provided we make sensible changes that will be to our ultimate betterment.

Reports from members, both new and old, indicate an increasing readiness of local parties, principally I think as a result of Union propaganda, to grant leave of absence and to come to some arrangement about expenses so that the full-time agent can attend, as he is entitled to attend, Annual Conference on an Agent's Credential even though he has not been appointed as a delegate.

The desirability of such is steadily becoming apparent even in the most 'hide-bound' of local parties. Sound common-sense is behind the Union's point of view and reason generally prevails.

It is obviously desirable that a party's full-time officer, who has to attempt to carry out conference decisions and guide and advise his party on same, should be present at conference either as a delegate or ex-officio in his capacity as a party agent. I hope that more parties will follow the example now being set by so many of the more progressive D.L.P's.

The 'Agent's Night'

I understand that, at the moment, Monday night is free of other engagements and is likely to remain so. Certainly, Morgan Phillips will do his best to keep the night clear for us. I know that we can command the support of all our members to whom 'invitation' tickets will soon be issued and it is anticipated that they will see that their delegates come along also. It will present a good 'send-off' to the social activity of this conference. The Chairman and Secretary of the Labour Party have already indicated that they will join us and it is hoped that the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Clement Attlee, M.P., P.C., will on this occasion 'Meet the Agents'.

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PRACTICAL ELECTIONEERING

(Continued from page 13)

individual sorties against individual electors (this may sometimes be done in groups of workers but the principle is unaltered). This is true whether the object of the sortie is to canvass the elector, to try to get him to show one of our window cards, or merely to put a piece of our literature through his letter-box.

(b) Faithful, accurate and regular reports to Centre.

(c) Comradeship in action.

I have not discussed in this article the work of the Polling-Day Committee Room for two reasons. First because there is much controversy about so-called 'systems' and this applies with force to polling-day organisation. Moreover, it is my purpose in writing these articles to establish the case that success in electioneering depends not so much upon the precise method of working as upon efficiency in whatever method may be adopted.

My second reason is that, believing as I do that there is no better method than the single-card system of polling-day operation, I have written a full description of this in an earlier article in *Labour Organiser* to which those of my readers who are interested are invited to turn.

I hope that the message of these articles has emerged. It is that practical electioneering is *scientific* electioneering. That the consequences of a given effort can be estimated and that the effort required to produce a desired result can be calculated.

That, in fact, elections are not decided by chance, or by whim, but by the degree of conviction backed by skill of the contending parties.

Building a Labour Hall

Reprints of the article published some time ago on the building of the Acton Labour Party Hall may be obtained from Faraday Hall, Horn Lane, W.3, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

ELECTION AGENTS AND THE ABSENT VOTER

(Continued from page 16)

because he or she will be on holiday or the like.

Service Voters

Those in the United Kingdom at the time of an election can vote by post for Parliamentary Elections and apply on form F/Vote/35, which is obtainable from their ship or unit.

Journey by Sea or Air

Those who are unable to go in person from their home address to their polling place without making a journey by air or sea can vote by post. This applies to a comparatively small number of voters who reside in out-of-the-way places, such as small islands off the coast.

Special Notes

All claims must be received by the R.O. not later than the last day for the delivery of nomination papers at an election.

The R.O., in disallowing a person's application to be treated as an Absent Voter, shall notify the applicant of the fact.

Any appeal from the R.O.'s decision lies to the County Court. A Postal Voter cannot vote in person at the Polling Station.

At an early date I hope to deal with the Proxy Vote, and meantime may I remind readers that there is no Proxy Vote without prior application to be put on the Absent Voters' List.

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